

MAY 2, 1999
Lyle D. Jaffe
Docket Management
FDA/DHHS
12420 Parklawn DR Rm 1-23
Rockville MD 20857

Dear Mr. Jaffe:

1716 '99 MAY 10 P3:32

The lives of today's hens are miserable enough to begin with: Hens used for their eggs are squeezed with up to five others into an indoor wire cage with floor space the size of a folded newspaper. Born to flap their wings and walk around, these chickens are barely able to move; most can never even sit comfortably. To stop them from pecking at each other out of desperation, workers slice off the chick's beaks with a hot blade, sometimes removing part of the bird's tongue or faces as well.

But when egg production drops, at least 75% of the 260 million laying hens in N. America endure another bizarre torment: Producers attempt to force one last laying cycle out of the exhausted spent hens before sending them to slaughter. They do it by cruelly and unnaturally forcing the hens into a "molt." In nature, hens replace old feathers with new ones every single year & spend about four months dropping old feathers & growing new ones. During molting season, hens don't produce eggs - an interruption factory farmers find unacceptably unprofitable. Forced molting throws hen's ~~body~~ system into collapse, stressing & shocking them into losing their feathers quickly & forcing their worn out bodies into a new laying cycle. This is not only bad for the chickens but for consumers as well since research shows that forced molting is a major cause of salmonella poisoning in eggs. The stressful conditions weaken the bird's immune system so badly that they are prone to disease, bone breakage & salmonella infections. The result is sick ~~birds~~ birds & contaminated eggs. Hens are deprived of food & water for 2 wks or more to trick them into laying more eggs.

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Forced molting is so cruel that in 1987 it was banned in

Great Britain, and most European countries do not allow food deprivation for more than 24 hours. Yet, in North America, no laws protect these poor birds, and as you read this, more than 6 million hens are being force-molted.

As only females produce eggs, 280 million male chicks per year are shoved into plastic bags and left to suffocate or be crushed to death.

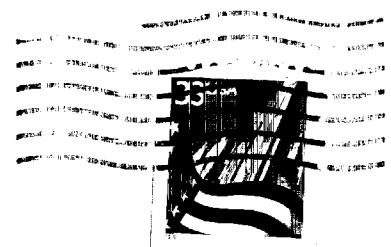
I support the petition to ban the forced molting of layer hens (docket 98P-0203/CP).

Sincerely for the Animals,

D. McCormick
3112 Watson Mill Drive
Loganville GA 30052



Ms. McCormick
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